



Dissolution in Concordance –A Jolt to Mental Peace

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Abstract— *The Partition year 1947 was a seismic year whose after effects can be felt even today. The division of British India was poorly planned leading to drastic upheavals. There arose schisms and tensions amongst once harmonious populations. Earlier the people used to live as one family. They used to share not just a cultural gene pool and biological ties, but common kinship institutions too. When the Partition was announced, it all ends gloomily. Our own mothers, sisters and daughters were violated, as they were considered the mark of communal purity. Various authors have shown how women were the immediate recipients of this trauma, either enduring the loss and death of their husbands or by enduring the loss of their own virtue at the hands of rape and sexual violation. There was a heinous display of savage brutality. The partition is not the partition of territory but it is the partition of hearts and souls of the people.*



Keywords— *Partition, loss, silence, violence, trauma*

1947 was a landmark year in the history of the subcontinent. It was on June 3, 1947 that the Viceroy Lord Louis Mountbatten, announced that independence would be brought forward to August that year, presenting politicians with an ultimatum that gave them little alternative but to agree to the creation of two separate states.

Pakistan – its eastern and western wings separated by around 1,700 kilometres of Indian territory – celebrated independence on August 14 that year; India did so the following day. The new borders, which split the key provinces of the Punjab and Bengal in two, were officially approved on August 17. They had been drawn up by a Boundary Commission, led by British lawyer Cyril Radcliffe, who later admitted that he had relied on out-of-date maps and census materials.

It was posed as a success. It was instilled in the minds of laymen that we were going to be free from the clutches of British rule after a long bad bumpy journey of around 200 years. It was thought that the making up of two different nations- India and Pakistan, would be the safest option but the ill effects of the same were not even thought in the bad dreams. “The largest and most terrible exchange of population known to history” (Ice-Candy-Man 159). Partition affected the lives of people and shaped their future

as well; in the tense communal situation, people wanted to get their tools and weapons sharpened;

They created disharmony among the people by defining communities based on religious identities and providing political representation to them. This led to a gradual decline in the long-standing intermixed and syncretic culture of India. According to estimates, more than 15 million people were uprooted and close to 2 million were massacred as a result of massive communal violence. Partition was not just a division of political territory but a division of the people as they were separated from their homes, livelihood, family and friends. One of the greatest accounts of partition can be found in the form of Amrita Pritam’s poem “Ajj Akhan Waris Shah Nu” (Ode to Waris Shah). Through this heart-wrenching poem, Pritam depicted the plight of the people, particularly women, who were faced with atrocities such as abduction, violence, rape, murder. Even in the novel *Pinjar* (1950), the same plight has been depicted. Pooro, the protagonist of the novel, had to undergo a lot of atrocities that once she felt that she “was neither one nor the other, she was just a skeleton, without a shape or a name” (25).

Communal violence kept escalating during those times. As many as one million civilians died in the accompanying riots and local-level fighting. Women and children were the major sufferers. Everyone was killing the other person just because he/she belonged to other religions. It seemed as if humanity had died in the souls of people. In *Train to Pakistan*(1956) by Khushwant Singh, it is depicted that people butchered each other even if they didn't want to. "One morning, a train from Pakistan halted at Mano Majra railway station...But somehow it was different. There was something uneasy about it. It had a ghostly quality." (93). The train was filled by the dead bodies. This triggered a sense of revenge and the story continues till today.

In a poem, "Hamara Rakt" (Our Blood), Sachchidanand Hiranand Vatsyayan Agyeya says:

yah idhar baha mere bhai ka rakt
vah udhar raha utana hee laal,
tumhaaree bahan ka rakt!
bah gaya, mileen donon dhara
jaakar mittee mein huee ek.

He tries to convey that these identities are insignificant as ultimately all of us are the same species. But this is what was missing at that time of Partition. People forgot their humane nature acted as barbaric and irrational beings.

The pre-partition life was ephemeral but real. People loved each other irrespective of the religion. In most of the Partition novels, this is clearly described. In *Cracking India* when the fire of Partition had just triggered, still people were hopeful that they will be safe and they will safeguard their neighbours too. In the novel, Imam Din and later a Sikh Granthi said, "To us villagers, what does it matter if a peasant is a Hindu, or a Muslim, or a Sikh? . . If needs be, we'll protect our Muslim brothers with our lives!" (p 56) . But later we see that how everyone turned to be an enemy. Even the lovers and admirers of Ayah turned to be her violators. They just considered her to be a prostitute and fulfilled their lust. Lenny after understanding the situation says, "Ayah is no longer just my all-encompassing Ayah - she is also a token- A Hindu" (93). We see how Ayah was 'wounded in the soul.' (185) Such kind of gruesome treatment was at large during Partition. Division on the basis of religion, a division that reverberates to the present day, remains a central question to grapple with.

Home is a symbol of identity for people. It is intricately woven by their sense of being. At the time of Partition, there were many miles long caravans of people going across the border. People at the time thought that the migration that was undergoing was for some short time span. They will get back to their homeland and ancestral homes after the situation is pacified and normalized. But

little did they know that all this would turn into a harrowing and traumatic experience for them. Their search for identity continued till their end. On a personal note, I have seen my grandfather getting upset if he was asked about partition. He was the one who lost his relatives and even father in the migration that took place from Lahore to India. What to talk about innumerable immaterial things and above all the memories of childhood! It was such a worst traumatic experience for a Partition survivor. I could then find his face wet with tears. Today I realize that a weeping over past was grieving for the present time too.

The rioting and killing hadn't even stopped after independence; in the small localities in which people lived, if they had few remaining neighbours from other communities; from their windows, they would occasionally see smoke rising in the distance, and they would know that another neighbourhood had gone up in flames. Large scale barbarity and irrationality overtook all other aspects at the time of Partition. The friendly neighbours turned into enemies and never left a chance to be violent against each other. Thomas Hardy wrote in his poem, *The Man He Killed*(1902)

"I shot him dead because —

Because he was my foe...

Yes; quaint and curious war is!"

The same situation was seen during the Partition times. People were filled with rage, monstrosity and negativity.

Old hatred is still alive and well. The Kashmiri people remain colonised, killed, exiled, raped, tortured, incarcerated and, in an ignominious addition to the catalog, blinded by nasty little lead pellets sprayed on protesters crying for freedom. Both countries often accuse each other of the agreed norms. There are numerous border skirmishes. These are the psychological dynamics that play out in the dispute over Kashmir. Both India and Pakistan claim Kashmir as if it were their ancestral property, and people on both sides feel a deep emotional attachment to it. As William Blake said, "it is easier to forgive an enemy than to forgive a friend". Whoever we are, it seems we can all feel a special kind of enmity for the enemies we most resemble – whether a sibling or a neighbour, we simply cannot accept "them" as "us" despite our obvious similarities.

There are various instances told by the Partition witnesses which have been recorded in the books, But still many remained buried in the silence of the people. Urvashi Butalia in her book, *The Other Side Of Silence* (1998) even talks about the people being silenced about their own missing women in the bloody upheaval. On the other hand, those missing women were most of the time not accepted by their own people. The most difficult task then for those

women was to pick up the broken pieces and build their lives once again, while being continuously haunted by the memories that were embedded in their minds. The harrowing and traumatic experience numbed them into silence again.

Fikr Taunsvi, the author of *The Sixth River* (2019) wrote a heart rendering description about India Pakistan Partition. No doubt she is a realist, yet his almost imperceptible and subtle irony, his heartbreaking bewilderment and anger at what he sees taking place around his beloved Lahore create an uncanny resonance across time:

“I knocked on many doors despite knowing that all houses had been adorned with big locks. And apart from the lovelorn caws of the crows and the shrieks of hungry birds, I found nothing else. . .It seemed that the meanings of emotions, traditions, demands and claims had changed immediately upon winning independence. Why had such freedom been brought into existence? Was it only to free dharma and shastras that we struggled for three hundred years against foreign rule? Did we strive to move forward or only to go back by thousands of years? Did we call to freedom only for life to regress?” (n.p)

The Partition in concordance was actually a traumatic experience for the common people. They could not get away with even the rarest thought of it. Even after so many decades, the haunting memories are writ large in the conscious mind. It was a kind of failure for all of us. Since those times till today, our honourable government only pays attention towards market sizes and geo political advantage. And turn a blind eye to the great and mounting danger which people pose to each other.

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